

NO AUG

NEW ORLEANS ATARI USERS' GROUP

The NOAUG News "Official Newsletter of the New Orleans Atari Users' Group" Vol 4 #7 August 1987

OSS Announces New Policy

Compiled by Todd Petit

OSS Newsletter (Winter '87) - In response to a changing software market, Optimized Systems Software, a long-time supporter of Atari computers, has announced a change in technical support policies and introduced a new line of low cost "bare bones" software to be known as **BareKare**. Two of the first offerings in this series are **Action!** utility libraries.

OSS has always been known for its excellent customer support over the phone, support it claims isn't even always related to their products (especially true in the ST world). Telephone time was eating up so much of its staff's development time that they have decided to limit the hours in which technical support will be offered over the phone. This time will be supplemented by a more extensive customer support system on their shop run BBS.

The new plan calls for free phone support to be offered only at the following (California) times: MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, and FRIDAY from 1:00PM to 5:00PM. Their current BBS system will be completely overhauled and should be in place by the time you read this. **BBS EXPRESS!** will probably replace their current software as the ability to leave E-mail to individuals will allow the OSS staff to distribute answers more efficiently than they can do now. The OSS BBS can be reached at: 408-446-3451. Users requesting help are asked to include their name, address, and (voice) phone number. Also include the model of your Atari, a list of any hardware modifications you may have made to your equipment, the product (and version number) that the problem concerns, and a brief description of the problem (along with the exact steps necessary to produce the problem). They get hundreds of calls a week so be patient if it takes a while to get a response.

BareKare is OSS's answer to a shrinking 8-bit market. OSS, marketer of most of the high-quality languages available for the XL/XE line, believes that most new commercial software for the 8-bits will have to come from the machines' users. **BareKare** software will follow some strict rules. It will be cheap (usually \$20), all documentation will be on the disk itself, and free technical support will not be available for it. It is this last feature that will help keep the cost down the

most in that costs for this support will not have to be built into the software. OSS hastens to add, however, that this software will not, for the most part, require the kind of technical support languages do.

The first two **BareKare** offerings are each priced at \$20 and come in the form of **Action!** support libraries. **The Shape Editor and Animator (SEA)** is a player/missile graphics utility for creating and animating multicolored shapes. You can create up to eight frames of a shape using an interactive PM editor. Shape animation routines are provided that can be INCLUDED into your **Action!** program to make your programming efforts easier. More help in the graphics area comes in the **Graphics Utilities Library (GUL)**. Text handling routines are a large part of **GUL**, supporting a wide variety of "mix-and-match" options like bold, italic, lightened, artifacted, and even flipped. Other routines give access to any graphics mode on any machine (assumed to mean XL's extra modes on an 800 class machine), as well as text windows in GTIA mode. Shapes can be framed, painted, and inverted in these graphics modes at near machine language speeds.

Both **SEA** and **GUL** can be ordered from OSS by calling 408-446-3099.

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ST Laser Printer

and more...



The NORUG News Bulletin Board

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For more information about the NORUG you should contact one of our club officers.

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The NORUG BBS operates 24 hrs. a day, 7 days a week. Call it at 738-3600.

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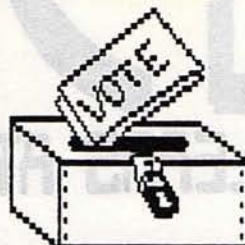
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First preference for newsletter articles is as *AtariWriter Plus* files. They may be presented to the editor at club meetings. If you wish to submit by modem please call first. Printed articles are also acceptable. Articles can also be uploaded to the BBS--please leave E-mail to the editor with the article name.

Special thanks to Sandra Petit & Laura Ferguson for their assistance in the preparation of this issue.

REMARKS

A Column of
Opinion by the
Editor of
The NORUG News



THE '87-'88 CHALLENGE!

By Todd Petit

N.O.A.U.G. - This newsletter is the first issue of *The NORUG News* published under the 1987-1988 elected officers of the NORUG. As such it should represent a new beginning for the club. Each set of officers we elect, each and every year, should be a new beginning for our club. Every year should bring something new and exciting to you as a member.

Our recent elections were the most exciting in NORUG history. For once it wasn't a "one man nominated for each position, he's elected, no sense in taking a vote" type of thing. We had actual races for the positions of Vice-President, Treasurer, Librarian, and Newsletter Editor. The Vice-President's race was decided by a single vote (don't ever again say "my vote doesn't count" people--it simply isn't true). There was unprecedented interest in this year's elections.

I credit our outgoing administration with this upsurge in interest. Last year they got a lot of things accomplished. They got the club moving again. Our meetings were better, more organized, more interesting, than ever before. Our newsletter and BBS reached new highs in quality. We have a new constitution and by-laws. NORUG *grew*--and new interest was generated.

You, the Membership of NORUG, re-elected some of those people, chose not to re-elect others, and brought some new faces to the Board and Cabinet. Now it is time for them to continue the work that was started last year. If they wanted these positions so much, if they thought they could do a better job than those they replaced or ran against, then make them *show* you! Get your vote's worth! Demand your vote's worth! Tell them what you want of them as officers of YOUR club.

Mr. President--what can you do this year to improve your performance over last year? How can you add even more excitement to a NORUG membership?

Mr. Vice-President--last year's VP showed the club that this doesn't have to be a "do nothing" position. Can you live up to that reputation, or do better? What can you bring to our growing 16-bit membership?

Mr. Treasurer--are there ways to better utilize our existing finances? How can we cut back on costs? What about raising more money?

Ms. Secretary--what can you do to further enhance the image of NORUG amongst other Atari groups in the country? How about with Atari itself? Software manufacturers?

Mr. Recording Secretary--how can you best relay the happenings of each meeting to the membership that might not have been able to attend?

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1050 Drive Fix For The UNFIXABLES!

By Vince Loustalot

N.O.A.U.G. - It took more than two and a half hours on various bulletin boards to download three large files to RAMdisk. I had waited for some time to get these jewels of programming expertise. Now it was time to store them on something less volatile than RAM. The first file copied to diskette without a problem. My trusty 1050 hummed like a well-oiled machine doing its job. Then it happened. The 1050 slowed down and skipped a beat. So did my heart (I only have one drive). Then it stopped (the 1050--not my heart), and a buzzing sound could be heard. Needless to say, my new treasures went to the bit bucket for permanent storage as I sadly powered down.

I took the 1050's case apart to find out where the buzzing was coming from. When the drive was turned on, the hub motor barely spun and the head was just sitting there vibrating. I had found the source of the buzz. Now the burning question in my mind was: *Why* is it buzzing? That question was not to be answered that evening. The whole drive died before my very eyes. Now nothing happened when the drive was turned on. Oh sure, the on/off L.E.D. came on, but the motors wouldn't turn.

I looked and poked and prodded, but all in vain. My trusty voltmeter decided to follow my drive and went to voltmeter heaven. I called several people in NORUG for help. They told me I could take comfort in the fact that I was not alone in my plight. At least two other people had the same problem, but so far no one had found a cure for the DOO (dreaded drive disease). They looked and prodded and poked to no avail, then added mine to the collection of dead 1050's.

After two weeks without a disk drive (and suffering from a serious case of computer withdrawal), I broke down and bought a digital multimeter. A kind friend took pity meantime and loaned me a drive (he didn't want to see a grown man cry anymore) so at least I could compute.

I brought my sick 1050 home. I decided I was going to fix it or give it a decent burial and stop its suffering. Armed with my shiny new DMM, I began taking voltage readings. Every chip had supply voltage going to it, so I decided that a chip must be faulty and not doing its job. A quick phone call to another friend in NORUG who has a field service manual gave me the numbers of the components in the motor control circuit. A quick trip to the local electronics supply house (and a quick 8 bucks) yielded replacements for the suspect chips. An hour and a half of fighting to replace the suspects yielded, at last, a still broken 1050.

WHAT NOW?!?!?!?

Then another friend in NORUG volunteered his field service manual to me (probably to stop the thirty phone calls a day). I poured through this tome of mystic lore and found that the sickness which affected my beloved 1050 was described nowhere in that manual. But there were several schematic diagrams, ummm. They told me that TP14 (test point) should be at 12 vdc. I measured the voltage at TP14 and found it to be a whopping 0.378 vdc. Unless my drive was designed to really

save energy, I was on to something. Working backwards, I found that I didn't have 12 volts going to the motors. Following the schematics from the power input, I arrived at the anode of CR15 (a diode) and measured 12.34 vdc and 17.36 vdc at the cathode, and that was good. Then I measured 17.36 vdc at the anode of CR16 and 3.61 vdc at the cathode, and that was *not* good. I removed CR16 and measured 4 megaohms forward resistance (a SLIGHT bit higher than it should have been). After replacing CR16 with a 3 AMP epoxy diode from Radio Shack (29 cents), I measured 24.4 vdc at the cathode of CR16 and 12.04 vdc at TP14. Nervously I reassembled the drive and turned it on. EUREKA! The motors came to life; the hub spun; the head went to track zero. My drive was alive!

I tore into the other two drives and found they were experiencing the same illness that had befallen mine. The 12 V voltage doubler diodes had died. Speed adjustments were also necessary with these two drives as they were no longer spinning at the recommended 288 rpm.

So, if your 1050 (perish the thought) should ever go to lunch, consider the two little diodes, CR15 and CR16. You can find them lurking at the very back of the board, nestled neatly among the large filter capacitors. If the motors don't turn and TP14 is not at 12 vdc, these little gentlemen may be your culprits.

(A diagram of the placement of CR15 & CR16 can be found on Page 4. Portions of this diagram originally appeared in the ATARI 1050 DISK DRIVE FIELD SERVICE MANUAL.)

SUPRA Has The Cure For a Sick Ape(-Face)

By Cairry B. Spiers

N.O.A.U.G. - I recently borrowed a Digital Devices interface from a friend of mine. While it was in my possession it expired. I was told about an article in the I/O Board of the May 1987 Antio, written by the ANTIC ED. The article stated that Digital Devices was no longer in business and that Supra Corp. now owns the rights to U-Print, another interface from Digital Devices. It went on to say that they would repair U-Print interfaces for \$20.00. Since the interface died in my possession I decided to give it a try.

I phoned Supra Corp. and told them of my problem. The person I spoke to said to send the interface along with a check for \$15.00 and the return number which they gave me. They would in turn check the interface, repair it (if possible), and return it within 5 working days. If they were unable to repair it they would return the interface and the check.

About 15 days later the package I was waiting for arrived. Inside was not the Ape Face but a new Supra MPP-1150 which has the extra I/O port, like the Ape Face. I immediately returned the new interface to my friend before it went out.

If anyone has similar problems the address and phone number of Supra is listed below.

Supra Corp.
1133 Commercial Way
Albany OR 97321
(503) 967-9875

PLOT/DRAWTO A Tiger!



By Bud Ralph

N.O.A.U.G. - An artist I ain't. Matter of fact, I couldn't pass "Stick Figure 101" if I could take the exam home, use the open book method and let my best friend do the grading. But, for those of you, like me, with no artistic talent and a desire to create computer art, there is a solution--provided you can draw a STRAIGHT line! As you have probably found out, the computer can draw only straight lines from A to B. If A and B are close enough to each other, and the sequence is continued, the line appears to curve. Just like "connecting the dots" on your Big Mac wrapper. Well that's what we are going to do in this article! Computereze for connecting the dots is called: "PLOT and DRAWTO".

First we must find a simple line drawing for a subject (I didn't say that we were going to be original). Since it will be at least two or three months before I finish this, football time should be with us and what better subject can we have than LSU's Mike the Tiger? I found this easy to copy picture in *The Times Picayune*. Note that it is a square format which cuts down on the scaling that we would otherwise have to do. In Atari graphics 8 (split screen), we have 320 horizontal and 160 vertical bits to draw with--so we are limited to a square picture of 160 x 160 bits.

We will take a sheet of graph paper (get it out of your kids school supplies) and lay out a grid of 160 x 160. (Note that I used a scale of 4 to 1 in my layout which uses 8 x 8 blocks on the graph sheet.) I then used a ruler and laid out 8 x 8 blocks on the picture to be copied. Now it gets a lot easier. But in order to connect the dots we must first place the dots! Starting in the upper left hand corner, which is called position "0,0", we go down 2 squares (we will later multiply all points by 4 to give us the 4 to 1 ratio and a larger picture) and place our first dot. This position is referred to as "0,2" and the first dot in a sequence is always "PLOT". So we have "PLOT 0,2". Next dot is over 2, down 2: the second dot, and each successive dot, is "DRAWTO", so we have "DRAWTO 2,2". The next position is "DRAWTO 5,3". The programming would therefore be: "PLOT 0,2;DRAWTO 2,2;DRAWTO 5,3", etc. PLOT and DRAWTO can be abbreviated to PL. and DR. to cut down on your typing.

Another good way to cut down on the typing is to use "DATA" statements for the DRAWTO positions. This is done in the accompanying program. The Tiger's left eye shadow has one PLOT and nine DRAWTOs. The DRAWTO positions

are put into DATA statements in line 490, remember that the position is comprised of two numbers, column and row, so line 490 contains 9 sets of 2 numbers. The position points are read by lines 30 and 40.

So, we have completed our connect the dots tiger and saved it to disk with the routine starting at line 1000. Looks kinda rough don't it? We now use Todd Petit's *Mod-8* program, (currently being modified by Myron Petit who apparently thinks that "USER FRIENDLY INSTRUCTIONS" means that he will smile when giving verbal instructions on the not yet documented changes), to smooth out the rough spots, convert it to *Koala Pad* using *Rubber Stamp* or some other conversion program. *Koala Pad*, *Picture Perfect* and others will allow us to use 4 colors in the picture whereas Gr.8 allows only one color with two luminances. After filling and coloring, you may want to go back to Todd's *Mod-8* and touch it up again.

I don't understand it! I have finished the write up and football season is still months away. Fishing is good tho. ■



(Bud's program can be found on Page 6.)

TIGER.BAS

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10 Graphics 8:Poke 710,0:Poke 709,14:C
olor 1
20 Plot 0,8:Rem LEFT EYE SHADOW
30 For D=1 To 9
40 Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y:Next D
45 For D=1 To 200:Next D
50 Plot 36,0:Rem LEFT NOSE FROM TOP
55 For D=1 To 17:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
56 For D=1 To 200:Next D
60 Plot 52,116
65 For D=1 To 13:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
70 Plot 88,0:Rem RIGHT TOP OF NOSE TO
TOP OF EYE. DATA 520
75 For D=1 To 8:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y:
Next D
77 For D=1 To 200:Next D
80 Plot 160,0:Rem TOP OF RIGHT EYE. DA
TA 530
85 For D=1 To 12:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
86 For D=1 To 200:Next D
87 Plot 144,4:Rem RIGHT EYE. DATA 540
88 For D=1 To 14:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
89 For D=1 To 200:Next D
90 Plot 0,24:Rem LEFT EYE. DATA 550
92 For D=1 To 13:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
94 For D=1 To 200:Next D
100 Plot 88,116:Rem RIGHT NOSE TO TOP.
DATA 560
105 For D=1 To 10:Read X,Y:Drawto X,
Y:Next D
106 For D=1 To 200:Next D
110 Plot 0,48:Rem BOTTOM OF LEFT EYE.D
ATA 570
115 For D=1 To 6:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
116 For D=1 To 200:Next D
120 Plot 64,136:Rem UNDER NOSE. DATA 5
80
125 For D=1 To 6:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
126 For D=1 To 200:Next D
130 Plot 92,52:Rem RIGHT PATCH & BRIDG
E DATA 590
135 For D=1 To 12:Read X,Y:Drawto X,
Y:Next D
136 For D=1 To 200:Next D
140 Plot 44,52:Rem LEFT PATCH. DATA 600
145 For D=1 To 5:Read X,Y:Drawto X,Y
:Next D
146 For D=1 To 200:Next D
150 Plot 1,1:Drawto 160,1:Drawto 160,1
59:Drawto 1,159:Drawto 1,1
155 For D=1 To 200:Next D
160 End :Rem GOTO 1000
490 Data 8,8,20,12,36,20,40,24,48,32,5
6,20,56,12,54,2,48,0
500 Data 48,8,52,12,52,20,48,32,44,52,
40,60,32,88,24,100,28,112,40,116,40,10
8,44,104,48,104,52,108,52,112,44,120
501 Data 40,116
510 Data 52,124,60,132,64,136,68,132,7
6,124,76,116,76,108,80,104,84,104,88,1
08,88,116,84,120,76,116
520 Data 80,8,80,20,84,32,92,24,96,20,
104,12,112,8,120,0
530 Data 160,20,158,24,152,32,148,40,1
40,44,120,44,100,48,92,52,100,58,120,6
0,140,60,160,56
540 Data 152,4,156,8,152,28,140,32,120
,36,112,28,108,24,112,16,128,8,128,20,
140,28,144,20,148,8,144,4

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550 Data 4,20,8,20,8,32,16,36,24,32,24
,24,32,28,32,32,28,40,20,44,14,46,8,44
,0,40
560 Data 96,112,104,100,100,88,92,60,8
8,52,84,32,76,20,76,8,80,4,84,0
570 Data 40,48,44,52,32,56,26,58,12,60
,0,60
580 Data 60,148,48,159,80,159,76,156,6
8,148,64,136
590 Data 132,72,160,68,160,88,148,84,1
40,80,132,72,112,80,100,88,80,84,54,82
,48,84,32,88
600 Data 16,76,0,88,0,72,16,76,32,88
1000 Rem THIS ROUTINE DUMPS THE SCREEN
TO DISK
1020 For A=1536 To 1542:Read B:Poke
A,B:Next A
1030 Data 104,104,104,170,76,86,228
1032 Poke 852,Peek(88):Poke 853,Peek(8
9):Poke 856,200:Poke 857,30:Poke 850,8
+3
1140 Open #1,8,0,"D:TIGER.PIC"
1150 Poke 852,Peek(88):Poke 853,Peek(8
9):Poke 856,200:Poke 857,30:Poke 850,8
+3
1160 A=Usr(1536,16)

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ATARI's ST Laser
Printer is Different

By Mike Fulton

ACROS OrnJuce, 1/87 (Reprint) - Atari's new laser printer was just debuted at the 1987 Winter Consumer Electronics show, and it offers both great value and great abilities, as well as some interesting features and possibilities.

The Atari laser printer (which doesn't seem to have a name yet. May I suggest AtariLaser?) (*it's the SLW Laser Printer, Ed.*) is designed to work with an Atari ST computer with a memory size of 2 megabytes or larger. Since it uses the ST's brain and memory to work, it can't be used with any other computer. So you'll understand how the Atari Laser Printer works, let me explain how most other laser printers work.

Laser printers need a lot of power and memory to make them work, so most have a powerful computer and the required memory built-in. The most common setup uses the Motorola 68000 CPU, the same as in the ST computers, and memory ranging in size from about 512K to about 2 megabytes. They also have circuitry which allow them to talk to the other computer which is sending information to be printed. With all this extra circuitry, the printers tend to get a bit expensive.

And while most laser printers use a mechanism which allows 300 dots per inch resolution, vertically and horizontally, the actual abilities of the printer are entirely dependent on the amount of memory it has and the program running its computer.

It takes a lot of memory to hold all of the information for an entire page. In fact, a full page of graphics at 300 dots per inch takes just over 1 megabyte of memory just for the image data, aside from memory used for font data storage and calculations. Laser printers with less than about 1.5 megabytes of memory are restricted to lower-resolution graphics or less than full page graphics.

Also, the protocols which let the main computer tell the laser printer what to do are defined by the program running the printer's computer. On most laser printers, that program cannot be changed, so you are stuck

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An Atari 8-bit Extra

from

The publishers of



Reviewed by Todd Pettit

N.O.A.U.G. - Anytime a new book is announced for the 8-bit Atari it is a cause for celebration. Let's face it, new publications haven't exactly been falling off the bookshelves lately. Magazine editors are crying that they can't fill their 8-bit pages due to a lack of submissions. And there are a lot of people who are saying that nothing new can be written about these machines. An Atari 8-bit Extra from A.N.A.L.O.G. Computing won't silence those critics--there is actually very little that is new here--but it will give the frustrated Atarian a wealth of new programs to type in and enjoy.

At \$8.97 for a 132 page soft-bound publication, the Extra is a bit on the expensive side. There are only 10 pages of ads (mostly for A.N.A.L.O.G.'s own goods) however, so you are getting much more than you would in a comparable number of magazine pages. The book itself is laid out very much like an issue of the magazine, but this works for the book and not against it.

Ignoring the M/L Editor used to type in some of the programs, the Extra contains 20 articles the editors of A.N.A.L.O.G. Computing found too long or esoteric for use in the pages of their monthly publication. There really is a mixed bag here, ranging from an in-depth (6 1/2 pages) study of *STAR RAIDERS* tactics to a GEM-like interface by David Castell. The articles are divided into six categories (the largest of which is GAMES).

APPLICATIONS includes "Hi-Score Display" for recording your game scores for posterity and "Create-a-base", an impressive multi-file BASIC and ML effort that will support databases of up to 16 fields per record, 31 bytes per field. Searching and reporting features are coupled with a screen dump and sort feature (claims to sort 25K in one minute) to create a program that should handle most people's database needs quite nicely.

Action! programmers will find some things to keep them busy in the GAMES section of the Extra. Three entries in this section are written in OSS's wonder language. In "squeeze" you fight advancing rows of multicolored bricks with a joystick-controlled brick-blaster, the object: to keep the advancing rows of bricks from meeting in the middle of the screen. "Reversi" will be interesting to anyone who ever wondered how to

write the "artificial intelligence" needed to get the computer to play a board game. Anyone with the *Action!* Toolkit from OSS might want to skip this next program. "Surface Run" is a later(?) version of the "Warp Attack" demo game included on that disk. If you don't have the Toolkit by all means type this one in--the graphics are very impressive and really show off *Action!*'s blinding speed.

For those of us still rooted in BASIC the Extra includes "Spy Plane II", a sequel by Mark Comeau to the original "Spy Plane" that appeared way back in A.N.A.L.O.G. #21. "Lawn Mower" puts you in the role of the neighborhood boy working his summer away by mowing all the yards in Atariville. Atariville is a strange place, too, with weird creatures called "Leggers" that must be avoided at all costs, holes that appear out of nowhere to gobble up one of your 3 precious lives, and a little orange fellow who goes by the moniker "Mad Planter". Cutting the grass was never so much fun...nor so dangerous. The next game in the bunch really intrigues me. It is a trivia game written by Jan Iversen, author of Xlent's entry in the computer-based trivia market. Is this an early version of that full-fledged work? "Invasion III" is primarily a shoot-'em-up, "Dragon Chase" boasts that it "depends more on a sharp mind than on quick reflexes" to rescue the princess from an evil dragon, and "Krebs Removal", the last game in the book, was written, says the author, to show that a relatively fast game can be written in BASIC. Redefined characters are used for the graphics in each of these three entries.

The **GENERAL** section includes the aforementioned *STAR RAIDERS* tutorial and one other program, "Integer BASIC". Barry Green's contribution works only on XL/XE models since it replaces the ROM OS with a RAM one, but can deliver to these higher-end model owners a new set of integer math routines (that replace the floating point routines in ROM) that can deliver speeds which are as much as 50% faster than standard BASIC. Not bad for a couple of listings that only run about a page.

The **GRAPHICS** section includes only two programs, a rather disappointing *Action!* demo and "CGM - Castell's Graphic Manager"--GEM for the 8 bits! Well, almost. CGM runs in Graphics 0, but does boast icons, many useful DOS functions, an advanced memo pad, a clock(), and a calculator. You'll really work for this one, though, it is probably the longest listing in the book.

Two tutorials make up the next section of the Extra. One on display list modifications and the other on random access files. Neither are easy concepts for the beginner to learn so, even though this isn't the first time these concepts have been presented, they have a definite value to the Atari community.

The last section, **UTILITIES**, offers a screen dump for your 1020 printer, programmable function keys, and "PassWord". "PassWord" is an ingenious little program that moves the directory on a standard DOS 2.0 disk to a different location than where it normally resides, making it "invisible" to a normal DOS directory read. A password is added to each disk to prevent prying fingers from simply booting that particular disk to get to your files. It won't stop a true hacker, of course, but for security from a casual user you could do worse.

And that is about it, folks. I have resisted temptation to compare this publication with A.N.A.L.O.G.'s first book,

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Atari 8-Bit Extra

Continued From Page 7

The A.M.A.L.O.G. Compendium, because I don't feel that I could do it fairly. The Compendium came into my life at a time when I had lots to learn about my Atari, and almost everything I read was new and exciting. The Extra is here now--after over 3 years of programming there isn't much I haven't encountered before. In that respect the Extra was a bit disappointing, but at this stage of the game one doesn't look a gift horse in the mouth.

Challenge

Continued From Page 2

Mr. Librarian--what kind of innovations can you bring to the library this year? Is there a better way to handle copying of our PD disks? How about rentals? A "Disk of the Month"?

Mr. Newsletter Editor--what can be done with the newsletter to make it even more informative than it was last year? How does it stack up against other club's newsletters? Can we get fewer reprints and more original articles?

Well, I would be a fool to print this without trying to answer those questions about the newsletter first. As you can see by the new format I am trying to bring you the best newsletter I can, with some new ideas, innovations, and, hopefully, more articles from the NORUG membership. I challenge the rest of the NORUG Board and Cabinet--as you should--to do what they can as well to make this next year the best in NORUG's history. ■

ST Laser Printer

Continued From Page 6

With one way of doing things.

An HP LaserJet Plus, for example, doesn't understand the commands that tell an Apple LaserWriter what to do. On some laser printers, however, you can change or modify the program changing or adding cartridges with additional program information encoded on ROM memory chips. However, this method is still limited to whatever cartridge happens to be plugged in at any given moment. If it's not the right one, tough luck.

Finally, while most laser printers allow some memory space to be used to contain font information sent from the main computer, this is still limited by the amount of memory available in the printer. Once it's filled, that's it. As with program cartridges, some printers allow you to change or add cartridges containing font information for different or additional typeface styles. However, as with program cartridges, this method is limited to whatever font cartridge happens to be plugged in at that given moment.

Atari's laser printer, on the other hand, doesn't work like the others. Instead of having its own computer and memory, or using cartridges, it uses the ST itself to supply the brain power. The ST drives the printer's laser mechanism directly, talking to it over the ST's high speed DMA bus and bypassing the middleman. The result is a printer which can match or surpass the performance of other systems costing more than double or triple the Atari laser printer's expected \$1500 price.

Having the ST supply the brain power gives the Atari laser printer the possibilities to do things other laser printers cannot. For example, say you have an Apple LaserWriter and you want to choose a particular font. However, you haven't sent that font to the printer yet, so the printer doesn't have it at the moment. What happens? The printer can't ask the computer for the font, so it just substitutes with a font it does have. Better than nothing, but not what you asked for. There's only so much room for font data in the printer's memory, and with this setup, no way to get around the problem.

With the Atari laser printer, one could conceivably have as many fonts available as you could fit on a disk. Say perhaps a 20 megabyte or larger hard disk? The program driving the laser printer wouldn't necessarily need to worry about more than one set of font data at a time, and it could get the fonts one at a time from disk as needed. Twenty megabytes, or more, on a hard disk could hold a lot of fonts.

Also, the program running the Atari laser printer could be set up to understand protocols for other printers, such as the HP LaserJet Plus or the Postscript page description language used by Apple's LaserWriter. Since the program driving the laser printer is loaded from disk into the Atari ST's memory, the possibilities are endless. There's a company which offers an add-on for the HP LaserJet which allows it to understand Postscript commands like the Apple LaserWriter. The add-on costs a few thousand dollars. The Atari laser printer could do the same thing by changing disks.

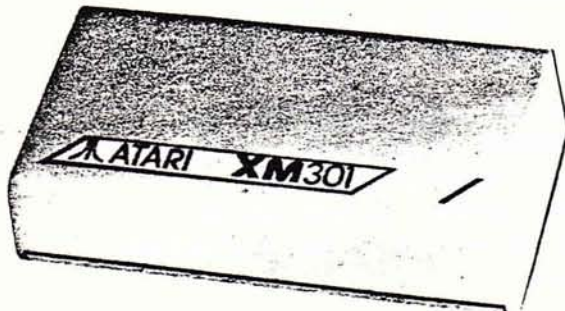
Of course, there are a few disadvantages. Since the Atari laser printer only works with ST computers, that means owners of PCs, Apples and other computers won't be able to take advantage of the Atari printer's low price and abilities. Darn. Seriously, though, it does require that you have a 2 megabyte or larger ST to be able to use it. However, I don't see that as being much of a problem. The new Mega ST2 and Mega ST4 computers will fit that requirement, and I imagine that there will soon be larger memory add-ons for the 520 and 1040ST as well. Besides, even if \$1500 is low for a laser printer, it's still not something that everybody is going to be getting. At least until the price comes down some more. ■

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**DON'T BLAME
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By Karl Belson

N.O.A.U.G. - It was because the XM301 was so relatively inexpensive that I entered the world of telecommunications. It is that same product that is making me regret my decision! The first XM301 I purchased would not auto-answer, and later was "fried" by a lightning strike. The second won't auto-answer with any kind of regularity, has often driven my printer crazy in the middle of a graphics dump, has caused my disk drives to stop responding at various times, and has even placed my phone off hook! All of these symptoms have been addressed by people in

other groups and in many other articles...all except the first: why is it that both modems would not auto-answer properly?

After discussing the problem with the hardware gurus of our users' group, I was willing to accept the fact that my second XM301 was a lemon like the first, when, all of a sudden, a ray of light struck (not lightning...thank goodness!). A friend of mine was kind enough to trade modems with me temporarily so that I could help debug the club's bulletin board system. While he had my modem he decided to check the auto-answer problem for himself. The results were surprising--the damn thing auto-answered just fine! There had to be something wrong with my particular hardware setup. But what could it be?

After stripping my system to the bare minimum (ie. monitor, console, drive 1, and the modem itself), and swapping SIO cables and power supplies, I was still unable to get the modem to auto-answer on my system.

Meanwhile, NOAUG's hardware SIGOP, Vince Loustalot, had a chat with one of his friends at the phone company about my problem. The suggested solution, oddly enough, didn't involve the modem. The suggestion was to swap the positions of the red and green wires at the wall outlet of my phone line! I thought the recommendation seemed rather esoteric (off the wall, if you prefer), but I was willing to try anything. The intention of the fix is to reverse the polarity on the phone line (not important to a telephone, but apparently important to the modem). I tried it and it worked!

If your modem is refusing to answer the telephone, and you can't find any problems elsewhere, perhaps Ma Bell can be blamed. Your telephone company installer may have gotten his lines crossed.

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SALE ENDS SEPT. 15!

(The following is an open letter to Atari Corp. with copies sent to Antic & ANALOG magazines.)

Dear ATARI,

We are writing to you at this time in an effort to clarify how we, the New Orleans Atari Users Group (NOAUG), fit into your future plans or if in fact we do at all?

We have been told, third hand, that Neil Harris has written a group of individuals that NOAUG does not support the ST and therefore ATARI Corp. would encourage the formation of a new USER'S group in our area. Since this information can not be substantiated we would like official clarification from this point of view.

First, if the formation of a new ATARI user group is indeed encouraged for the New Orleans area what statement about us does that make? Is it, as some have said, a death bell for NOAUG? That is, what would ATARI Corp. have us do? We bought the first ATARI 520ST in town through the special user group offer. (LIST PRICE!) Direct through ATARI not a retailer. We did this expecting to show some club commitment to ATARI and the future and in return be assured of developing a good line of communication for our members regarding the "new" ATARI. This we did even when we had over 100 8-bit club members on our rolls. Since that time, of course, the 8-bit membership has not been the growth area and we had many 16-bit users join us and have had many 8-bit members make the transition to the 16-bit machine. This we were able to do and still maintain NOAUG as the "official" ATARI user group.

Second, still if a new club is being given official ATARI Corp. support, what exactly does that mean? That is we have been the "official" ATARI user group with an excellent reputation for 7 loyal years. We have a complete working relationship with surrounding ATARI user groups from other cities within driving distance. We have had the support of major software companies and we publish a newsletter and correspond with user groups all over the USA and even a few in foreign countries. We maintain a club BBS and perform community service helping to maintain ATARI school equipment because who else can a school with 50 ATARI computers turn to? ATARI Corp?

Should we feel insulted? Should we feel that if ATARI intends to build another club to compete with us ATARI is in effect closing the door on us for continuing 16-bit support from software manufacturers that we already enjoy? Why should we expect ATARI to remain loyal to us? What more can we do to deserve ATARI support? We have called other user groups and they feel as we do....The "New ATARI Corp." isn't

helping them either. But, we are not concerned about the lack of help from the "New ATARI Corp." We are concerned about official ATARI Corp. sabotage doing us in. This even after saying through news media that user groups will be "fully supported" by the "New ATARI Corp.". It hasn't happened! Why not? It can't be blamed on the user group coordinator; Ms. Sandi Austin has been helpful each time we asked but unless we do the initiating ATARI does not even know we exist. Even though people expect us to know we never have the "official" news regarding ATARI brand equipment. We do not know if, when, or what ATARI will be selling till we see it in the stores like the general public. Is that being fully supported?

If ATARI has some statement to make to 8-bit clubs please do so now. If ATARI has some support to offer "official" user groups, don't we qualify? Did we get it? We have spent a great deal of money promoting ATARI and not one penny was generated by ATARI Corp. We never expected anything in return. We are not unrealistic. Most of us are professionals and many of us have businesses and business interests. We are not stupid in that we understand the future for ATARI Corp. is not going to be in 8-bits. That is fully understandable and I would certainly agree in the foreseeable future that our large 8-bit following will be gobbled up by higher technology and the 8-bit following will dwindle to the minority. These are facts we understand but do the loyal 8-bit people and established 8-bit user groups deserve to be pushed aside because after all, are not the 8-bit user groups largely responsible for there being ATARI Corp. in the first place? We were there when we were needed. Now, what are you doing to repay our efforts?

I was proud of our people, we appeared capable of avoiding the trap that has affected so many user groups around the country. We thought peaceful co-existence was indeed possible and that we did not feel the 8-bit should be forced out quite yet. It should be allowed to go its natural course. We offered separate treasury and officers for the ST-sig. Now we hear that is not enough. WHY not? Why do our club members feel we are being forced into a situation that precludes survival, by the very corporation that we have supported over the years? Why?

The New Orleans Atari Users Group

Dave Porter, President



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